



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK FROM EXTREME HEAT *PROVIDERS UNDER SCRUTINY WHILE PUBLIC URGED TO CHECK ON VULNERABLE ADULTS*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Human Services' Child Care Licensing and Adult Protective Services (APS) divisions are stepping up efforts to make sure children and vulnerable adults are safe during the extreme summer heat wave. Child care providers are being reminded that during periods of extremely high heat indices and air quality alerts, outdoor play can pose multiple health risks. These risks are compounded for very young children and those with health issues. Child care centers are required to maintain indoor temperatures between 68 and 78 degrees. Providers who offer transportation in vehicles that are not air conditioned are being asked to suspend that service until temperatures drop below the triple digits.

"Infants and small children are especially vulnerable during these hot summer days," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "We cannot tolerate one mistake or misstep during this weather emergency. We're pleased that agencies across the state are acting responsibly. For instance, when the copper wiring from an air conditioning unit was stolen from a center in Memphis last week, that agency voluntarily closed, which unfortunately inconvenienced the families of 150 children. It was the responsible thing to do and was what it takes to ensure our kids are safe."

Commissioner Lodge is also urging the public to check on their vulnerable neighbors, primarily seniors and persons with disabilities. Adult Protective Services counselors across the state are increasing their visits to these clients.

"A majority of our APS clients—nearly 60 percent—are referred to the Department because of self-neglect," said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. "These clients are most at risk for heat-related illnesses, because they may not have or be running their air conditioning and may be staying shut inside overheated homes. It is imperative that we, along with family and neighbors of our vulnerable citizens, help look out for these individuals."

Many Tennesseans, including APS clients, are hesitant to turn on their air conditioners in order to keep their energy bills low. DHS administers the LIHEAP program, which helps low-income citizens pay their cooling and heating bills. Nineteen non-profit and government agencies administer the LIHEAP program in all 95 counties. These agencies have also been tapped by Governor Phil Bredesen to help distribute air conditioners to those most in need.

To report possible abuse or neglect of an adult, call toll free 1-888-APS-TENN (1-888-277-8366).

For more information on the LIHEAP program and a list of LIHEAP agencies, visit:
http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/afs_he.htm

To report child care violations, call the Child Care Complaint Hotline toll free 1-800-462-8261.

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